



## User Guide

This guide contains information on how to use the Durham Key Options Choice Based Lettings scheme

-  **Policy Summary**
-  **How to Complete Your Application Form**
-  **How to Use The Scheme**
-  **Contact Details**

## EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

All Durham Key Options documentation can be provided in large print, audio tape or CD, electronically via email or in Braille. We can also provide an induction loop, BSL interpreter, same gender interview or home visit if required.

If you would like us to provide this information in your first language, or would like us to provide a translator and meet with you to discuss its contents, please contact us on the relevant Durham Key Options telephone number as listed below. We can also provide same gender interviews and home visits within County Durham when required.

### Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਾਤਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰੇਂ ਜਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਕ ਅਨੁਵਾਦਕ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਮਿਲਕੇ ਇਸਦੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਾ ਵਸਤੂ ਤੇ ਚਰਚਾ ਕਰੋ, ਕਿਰਪਾ ਦੁਰਹਮ ਕੀ ਅੱਪਸ਼ਨਸ (Durham Key Options) ਦੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਨੰਬਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ। ਅਸੀਂ ਲੋੜ ਪੈਣ ਤੇ ਕਾਊਂਟੀ ਦੁਰਹਮ (County Durham) ਦੀ ਹੱਦ ਵਿੱਚ ਘਰ ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਲਿੰਗ ਨਾਲ ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤ ਕਰਵਾ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

### Bengali

আপনি যদি উপরে দেওয়া বিবরণ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান বা আপনি যদি একজন দোভাসীর দারা এই বিষয় আলাপ করতে চান তবে দয়া করে নিচে দেওয়া ডারাম টেলিফোন নম্বারের তালিকা থেকে নম্বার বেছে নিয়ে আশাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুণ। দরকার হলে আমরা শুধু পুরুষ বা মহিলা দারা আপনার সাথে আলাপ করতে পারি এবং কাউন্টি ডারাম এলাকায় বসবাসকারী হলে আমরা আপনার ঘরে এসে আলাপ করতে পারি।

### Hindi

यदि आप चाहते हैं कि हम आपको आपकी मातृभाषा में सूचना प्रदान करें, या आप एक अनुवादक चाहेंगे जो आपके साथ सूचना के बारे में चर्चा कर सके, तो कृपया हमें नीचे दिये गये उचित Durham Key Options टेलीफ़ोन नम्बर पर सम्पर्क करें। यदि आवश्यकता हो तो हम County Durham के भीतर समान लिंग के व्यक्तिद्वारा इंटरव्यू के अलावा आपके घर आकर भी बातचीत कर सकते हैं।

### Cantonese

如果你需要此資訊的其他語言版本，或者你需要一名翻譯工作人員與你一同探討此資訊的內容，請通過杜倫郡以下相關號碼聯絡我們。如果需要，我們還可以安排同性別的工作人員與你訪談，以及杜倫郡內家庭拜訪。

### Mandarin

如果您需要此资讯的其他语言版本，或者您需要一名翻译工作人员与您一同探讨此资讯的内容，请通过杜伦郡的以下相关号码联络我们。如果需要，我们还可以安排同性别的工作人员与您访谈，以及杜伦郡内家庭拜访。

### Polish

Jesli potrzebujesz aby ta informacja została udostępniona w języku polskim lub jesli potrzebujesz tłumacza, który mogłby się z Toba spotkać i omówić treść tej informacji, skontaktuj się z nami wybierając odpowiedni numer telefonu z dostępnymi opcjami ponizej. Jesteśmy w stanie zapewnić też rozmowy z osobą tej samej płci oraz wizyty domowe w obszarze Durham.

### French

Si vous desirez recevoir ces informations dans votre langue maternelle ou si vous souhaitez que nous vous procurions un traducteur pour vous rencontrer et en discuter le contenu, veuillez nous contacter en sélectionnant l'indicatif correspondant à Durham, parmi les options des numéros de téléphone indiqués ci-dessous. Nous pouvons en outre, organiser des entrevues avec une personne de même sexe ainsi que des visites à domicile dans le comté de Durham quand cela est requis.

### Arabic

إن أردت الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغتك الأم أو إن أردت وجود مترجم لمناقشة هذه المعلومات فيمكانك الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الموجود أدناه الخاص بخدمات مدينة درم. يمكننا أيضاً تأمين مقابلات مع شخص من نفس جنسك كما يمكننا ترتيب زيارات منزلية ضمن مدينة درم إن احتاج الأمر لذلك

### Urdu

اگر آپ جا چئے ہیں آپ کو یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان میں فراہم کی جائیں یا آپ کو ایک مترجم کی ضرورت ہے تو آپ سے مل کر اس کے مندرجات پر لٹکو کرے تو آپ یونیورسٹی ڈرمن میلینوف فہرست کے مطابق نمبر پر تم سے رابطہ قائم کریں ہم آپ کو آپ کی پعن کے مطابق عورت یا مرد مترجم بھی سپیا کر سکتے ہیں ڈرمن کاؤنٹی میں ضرورت پڑنے پر گھر بیووے بھی کیے جاسکتے ہیں۔

 Chester-le-Street 0191 387 1919

 Derwentside 0845 850 5600

 Durham City 0191 301 8499

 East Durham 0800 032 0835

 Sedgefield 0845 505 5500

 Teesdale 01833 690 000

 Wear Valley 01388 765 555

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## **SECTION 1 - DURHAM KEY OPTIONS POLICY SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Choice Based Lettings is an open and transparent way to let properties, allowing applicants to see for themselves the number and type of properties available. Applicants choose which properties to ‘bid’ (note an interest in) for and feedback is provided on the number of bids submitted and priority of successful applicants.

The Choice Based Lettings Scheme enables applicants to have access to a range of social housing across County Durham and also incorporates alternative housing options such as nomination arrangements with other registered social landlords, private sector rented properties, low cost home ownership options and mutual exchange schemes. This increases choice and availability of accommodation.

### **WHICH LANDLORDS ADVERTISE THEIR PROPERTIES THROUGH DURHAM KEY OPTIONS?**

Durham Key Options is a partnership between Durham County Council (incorporating Chester-le-Street, Durham City and Teesdale areas) and:

-  Dale and Valley Homes
-  Derwentside Homes
-  East Durham Homes
-  Sedgefield Borough Homes

For a full list of landlords who advertise through Durham Key Options, please visit [www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk](http://www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk) or contact a Durham Key Options partner organisation.

Durham Key Options operates a Common Housing Register between all partners. You only need to make one application to the scheme to bid on any property that meets your needs and household size within County Durham.

### **WHO CAN APPLY?**

Anyone aged 16 years or over can apply to join Durham Key Options. In line with Government legislation, some applicants may not be eligible to join the scheme due to immigration control or unacceptable behaviour.

### **ASSESSMENT/VERIFICATION OF APPLICATIONS**

The law states that we must give priority or “reasonable preference” to certain categories of people who have a more urgent housing need than others. Applicants who meet the criteria for reasonable preference will qualify for bands A, B or C.

Applicants who do not meet the criteria set out for a reasonable preference group will qualify for Bands D or E with Band F containing those applicants with a recent history of anti social behaviour or significant rent arrears.

Durham Key Options partner organisations will determine the property type and size for which an applicant can bid.

Each Durham Key Options partner will request information/documentation from applicants to verify their eligibility.

## BANDS

Applicants will be placed into one of six bands according to their assessed need and entitlement.

Within Bands A, B and C below, the '+' category is given priority. For example, Band A+ is given priority over Band A.

BAND	QUALIFYING CRITERIA
<b>Band A+</b> High priority need	Applicants within this band are eligible for all properties via the choice based lettings scheme in the first instance in cases of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regeneration schemes within County Durham</li></ul>
<b>Band A</b> High priority need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Urgent medical reasons</li><li>• Supply and demand transfers</li></ul> <p>Urgent medical cases are given priority over supply and demand transfers.</p>
<b>Band B+</b> Multiple housing need	Homeless applicants accepted as statutorily homeless with a full duty to be housed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) due to violence or threat of violence  OR  Applicants with <b>two or more</b> housing needs (detailed in Band B) where <b>at least one</b> is in the following preference groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicants who need to move due to high medical need (outlined in appendix 2 of this policy)</li><li>• Applicants overcrowded by at least two bedrooms</li></ul>

## Band B Multiple housing need

Applicants with **two or more** housing needs from the following preference groups:

- Homeless applicants accepted as statutorily homeless with a full duty to be housed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002)
- Applicants occupying unsanitary, overcrowded (one bedroom short of requirements) or otherwise unsatisfactory housing
- Applicants who need to move due to medical or welfare grounds in accordance with the medical framework for medical priority found in appendix 2 of this policy
- Applicants who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship

<b>Band C+</b> <b>Single housing need</b>	<p>Applicants who fall into one of the following preference groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants who need to move due to high medical need (outlined in appendix 2 of this policy)</li> <li>• Applicants overcrowded by at least two bedrooms</li> <li>• Homeless applicants accepted as statutorily homeless with a full duty to be housed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) who do not have multiple housing needs</li> <li>• Applicants living in intensive supported housing their support plan identifies ability to successfully move into an independent tenancy</li> <li>• Care leavers</li> </ul>	<b>Band D</b> <b>General housing need</b>	<p>Applicants who have a housing need which is not one of the statutory preference groups and therefore do not meet the criteria for Bands A, B or C as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants leaving the armed forces who do not fall within the criteria of the homelessness legislation and have served three years or longer or who have been medically discharged</li> <li>• Applicants wishing to live independently with no other housing need</li> <li>• Applicants needing larger accommodation (outside of the overcrowding criteria) with no other housing need</li> <li>• Relationship breakdown with no other housing need</li> <li>• Applicants threatened with homelessness within three months, in order to prevent actual homelessness</li> </ul>
<b>Band C</b> <b>Single housing need</b>	<p>Applicants who fall into one of the following preference groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants occupying unsanitary, overcrowded (one bedroom short of requirements) or otherwise unsatisfactory housing</li> <li>• Applicants who need to move due to medical or welfare grounds in accordance with the medical framework for medical priority found in appendix 2 of this policy</li> <li>• Applicants who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship</li> <li>• Non-statutory homeless</li> </ul>	<b>Band E</b> <b>No housing need</b>	<p>Applicants who are adequately housed and have no housing need.</p>
		<b>Band F</b> <b>Reduced Priority</b>	<p>Applicants with a reduced priority within the scheme as a consequence of outstanding rent arrears (not caused by exceptional hardship) or unacceptable behaviour</p>

## LOCAL LETTINGS POLICIES

In some cases a partner landlord may introduce a Local Lettings Policy to ensure good management of stock. For example:-

- Areas where housing is in short supply
- To ensure balanced communities and prevent anti social behaviour
- To take into account rural or city centre related issues with regard to demand and affordability

In all cases where a local lettings policy exists this will be noted on the advert and details of the full policy will be available on the Durham Key Options Website or from partner landlord offices.

Details of areas covered by local lettings policies are included in the Durham Key Options Areas List.

## ADVERTISING/BIDDING

All available properties across County Durham are advertised on a weekly basis with eligible applicants being able to bid via a variety of methods (see Section 3 – User Guide).

## NOTIFICATION

All applicants are notified in writing of the outcome of their application and given the right to appeal.

## QUOTAS/TARGETS

A banding system helps ensure preference is given to those in greater housing need, whilst creating a balance between accommodating those in the greatest need and creating mixed communities.

One way to achieve this is to share out a *quota/target* of properties to the reasonable preference groups. Band A is awarded overall preference for any property but thereafter an agreed proportion of properties will be advertised with preference to bands B — D, giving the majority of properties to those in greatest housing need, and a much smaller proportion to those applicants with lower level needs.

## MAKING AN OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION

Once the advertising cycle has closed the computer draws up a shortlist of all applicants who have bid for that property.

The shortlist is produced according to the advertised band and date of application/priority date.

If there are no bids received from the advertised band, then the shortlist will be considered in band order.

Adapted properties will be considered differently and are allocated to the most suitable applicant.

If an applicant refuses a property it will be offered to the next qualifying applicant on the shortlist and so on until it is accepted.

If an offer is accepted, that applicant will no longer be able to bid for other properties.

## FEEDBACK

Each week Durham Key Options will publish information giving details of how properties have been let.

This information is designed to be useful for applicants when deciding which areas/property types to bid for.

## DIRECT LETS

In certain exceptional circumstances a property may be let directly to an applicant. Such cases will be agreed by the Durham Key Options partner landlord. Examples of when this will occur include:

- The letting of a significantly adapted property
- In cases of succession to a tenancy where the property is inappropriate to the successors needs
- Any cases where the need is specialist or particularly urgent

Such cases will still be advertised to ensure fairness and transparency (but applicants will be unable to bid).

## **REFUSALS**

There are no penalties for refusing offers of accommodation, with the exception of direct offers in some cases and offers to statutory homeless applicants.

## **APPEALS PROCESS**

Applicants are entitled to appeal in the following circumstances:

- If it is decided that an applicant is ineligible to join the register
- Where an applicant feels they have been treated unfairly in the letting process.
- Where applicants have been removed from the register other than at their own request.

Upon notification of a decision an applicant is given 21 days to request an appeal (in writing).

Durham Key Options operates a two stage appeal process. Stage one is considered by a senior officer from the assessing partner organisation, and stage two by Head of Housing at Durham County Council.

Appeals in respect of statutory homeless applicants are dealt with by the Housing Solutions Team at Durham County Council.

## **MONITORING**

Durham Key Options will monitor the scheme to ensure it meets its aims and objectives.

## **OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS**

### **Mutual Exchange**

Tenants with secure or assured tenancies have the right to exchange their property as long as they comply with their tenancy obligations and meet the relevant statutory conditions.

For further information on the Mutual Exchange scheme please contact your nearest Durham Key Options partner organisation.

### **Low Cost Home Ownership/Shared Ownership**

There are a range of products available to help you buy a home.

### **Nomination to a Housing Association property**

Durham Key Options works alongside Housing Associations across County Durham and has an arrangement with them to nominate applicants from our housing register for properties which they own. These will be advertised through Durham Key Options in the same way that partner landlords' properties are.

Further information on which housing associations have properties in County Durham is available on the Durham Key Options website [www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk](http://www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk) or on request from a Durham Key Options partner organisation.

## **UPDATING APPLICATIONS**

Applicants are obliged to notify the Durham Key Options partner organisation of any change in their circumstances which may affect their application. Changes in circumstances may affect an applicant's banding priority. This will also result in a change to their application/priority date which is used in the shortlisting process.

In cases where an applicant moves into a higher band, the new date for shortlisting purposes is the date that Durham Key Options were made aware of that change of circumstances.

In cases where an applicant moves to a lower band, the original application date will be used.

Durham Key Options will carry out an annual review of all applications, to ensure applicants' details are accurate.

## REMOVAL FROM THE HOUSING REGISTER

The Durham Key Options partner landlord will notify the applicant in writing that they are considering removing their application from the Register, giving 28 days for the applicant to reply.

Applicants will be removed from the register if any of the following occur:-

- They request to be removed
- They accept an offer of accommodation
- They fail to reply to a request for further information
- They illegally occupy a property owned by a social housing provider without express permission
- They or a member of the household to be rehoused becomes ineligible in accordance with this policy
- It is found that false information has been given on the application form or in any supporting document

Where a decision is made to remove an application from the register the applicant will be notified in writing and given details of the appeals process.

## SECTION 2

### HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR DURHAM KEY OPTIONS APPLICATION FORM

You can apply to join Durham Key Options by completing a Durham Key Options Application Form, which can be obtained from any Durham Key Options partner organisation. You can also complete a Durham Key Options Application Form on line at [www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk](http://www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk)

You **must** complete **all sections** of the Application Form, with the exception of Section 10 which may not be applicable to every applicant. Any incomplete sections may result in the form being returned to you to complete in full. This may delay registration of your application.



If you are unsure of any terms that have been used in the Housing Application Form please contact a Durham Key Options partner landlord who will be happy to explain them.

### WHAT IF I NEED HELP?

If you would like a family member, friend or support worker to assist you in using Durham Key Options, please provide their name and contact details, specifying if this person has authority to act on your behalf.

If you would like support from Durham Key Options to complete the Housing Application Form, or using the Durham Key Options scheme, please tell us how we can help you.

## WHAT INFORMATION DO I NEED TO PROVIDE?

### Identity

You *must* provide proof to confirm your identity/date of birth, current address and national insurance number. Only one form of proof is required for each of these.

Original documents can be verified and copied at a partner landlord's local office or if you send the required documentation by post they will be returned to you as soon as possible. Examples of evidence include:

<b>Identity/Date of Birth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Birth Certificate; <b>or</b></li><li>• Passport; <b>or</b></li><li>• Drivers Licence</li></ul>
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<b>Current Address</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utility bill (from within the last six months); <b>or</b></li><li>• Bank Statement (from within the last six months); <b>or</b></li><li>• Letter from the person applicant is "living in" with</li></ul>
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<b>National Insurance Number</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NI Card; <b>or</b></li><li>• Payslip; <b>or</b></li><li>• P45/P60</li></ul>
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### Supporting Information

When completing your Durham Key Options application form you should pay attention to any sections that are highlighted with a  symbol.

Durham Key Options will request supporting evidence from you to verify your circumstances should you have completed any of these sections.

Examples of the evidence that will be required is stated within the table located on the following pages and you should provide these when submitting your form.

Circumstance	Evidence Required
Immigration Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Passport; <b>and/or</b></li><li>• Letter from the Home Office (may vary depending on status)</li></ul>
Access to children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter from your ex-partner confirming the access; <b>or</b></li><li>• Letter from your solicitor confirming the access</li></ul>
Pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MAT B1 form; <b>or</b></li><li>• Letter from your doctor</li></ul>
Asked to leave by landlord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Notice to Quit from your private landlord; <b>or</b></li><li>• Letter from your landlord advising why he is serving a Notice to Quit; <b>or</b></li><li>• Relevant papers from the County Court</li></ul>
Care Leaver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter from your social worker; <b>or</b></li><li>• Personal Advisor detailing the date you are leaving care and any specific details regarding your Pathway Plan</li></ul>
Discharged from hospital or Need to leave Supported Housing/Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name and contact details of the person dealing with your discharge from hospital; <b>and</b></li><li>• Any relevant paper work (supporting organisation will need to confirm that you are ready to move from care and can manage a tenancy)</li></ul>
Forces discharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discharge papers from HM Forces – these documents must confirm date of discharge and that you have either served for at least 3 years <b>or</b> are being medically discharged</li></ul>

To give/receive support to a friend or family member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The name and address of friend or family member; <b>and</b></li> <li>Details of why you need to move closer to the above; <b>and</b></li> <li>Supporting evidence from any other agencies, such as your doctor, social worker or other professional working with you</li> </ul> <p>Please note that evidence must <i>clearly state the benefits of moving closer</i> to either give or receive support</p>
Loss of tied accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notice to Quit - P45 in relation to the relevant employment; <b>and</b></li> <li>Letter from employer stating termination of employment</li> </ul>
Release from prison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expected release date; <b>and</b></li> <li>Release papers; <b>and</b></li> <li>Name and contact details of Probation Officer</li> </ul>
Cannot afford rent/mortgage/ upkeep <b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Income &amp; expenditure details; <b>and</b></li> <li>Proof from bank/building society/mortgage provider stating confirming you are in arrears ; <b>or</b></li> <li>Proof from court/solicitor in relation to any legal proceedings; <b>or</b></li> <li>Information regarding other debt</li> </ul>
Eviction order/ repossession <b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter from Bank/ Building Society/ Mortgage Lender confirming the repossession; <b>or</b></li> <li>Relevant papers from the County Court</li> </ul>
To be nearer to work/training <b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter from employer confirming relevant appointment; <b>or</b></li> <li>Letter confirming acceptance onto relevant training course</li> </ul>

To move nearer to special facilities such as school/hospital <b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name and address of the special facility; <b>and</b></li> <li>Details of why you need to move closer to the above; <b>and</b></li> <li>Supporting evidence from any other agencies, such as your doctor, social worker or other professional working with you</li> </ul>
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**Important note:** all of the identification marked with a **A** above is required to process your Durham Key Options application, and must clearly explain the benefits of moving closer to the special facility listed. In these cases you may also be sent a financial assessment form.

If you, or anyone who wants to be rehoused with you, have any convictions, other than spent convictions as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, you need to give us details – we may check this information.

If you have declared a medical condition we will assess your condition based on the information provided, if you wish to provide additional information you may do so but your GP or medical specialist may charge you for this.

## HOW WILL MY APPLICATION BE ASSESSED?

Your application will be considered in line with the Durham Key Options Lettings Policy to identify your level of housing need. Your application will then be placed into one of the following bands.

- Band A - High priority need
- Band B - Multiple housing need
- Band C - Single housing need
- Band D - General housing need
- Band E - No housing need
- Band F - Reduced Priority

To take account of the differing degrees of severity within Bands A, B and C a 'plus' category is awarded.

The type/size of property appropriate for your needs is also assessed.

For more information on banding see section 1 – Durham Key Options Policy Summary (page 3)

## HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY APPLICATION HAS BEEN ACCEPTED?

Once your application has been assessed, you will be informed in writing whether or not you have been accepted onto the Durham Key Options Housing Register.

If you have been accepted, this letter will also detail your assessed band, your application date, your Durham Key Options housing application number. You will also be issued with a PIN number. Your PIN number will automatically be your date of birth but you are able to change it if you wish to another memorable date.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: YOU WILL NEED TO KEEP YOUR APPLICATION NUMBER AND PIN NUMBER SAFE, AS WITHOUT THEM YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BID.**

## SECTION 3

### USER GUIDE

Once your application has been assessed as eligible you will be placed on the housing register.

### HOW WILL PROPERTIES BE ADVERTISED?

Durham Key Options will advertise properties on a weekly cycle. Every Thursday available properties will be advertised in the following ways:

- On the Durham Key Options website [www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk](http://www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk)
- In the Durham Key Options property magazine
- In Durham Key Options partner landlord offices
- In a range of public buildings

If you are unable to access the adverts from one of the above please contact a Durham Key Options partner landlord for assistance.

### WHAT WILL THE ADVERT TELL ME?

The advert will detail:

- Band(s) to which preference will be given
- Landlord
- Location (map link available on the website)
- Property Size
- Rent
- Other property features such as parking and garden arrangements

The advert also tells you if there are any bidding restrictions such as:

- Age requirement
- Property adaptations

## WHAT DO THE ADVERT ICONS MEAN?

		Bedrooms		Garden
		Maximum Age		Supported Housing
		Minimum age		Sheltered Housing
		Pets allowed / not allowed		Wheelchair adapted
		Off street parking		

## WHEN WILL NEW PROPERTIES BE ADVERTISED?

Each week properties will be advertised from a Thursday morning until midnight the following Tuesday evening. This is called the "Advertising Cycle".

It does not matter what time you place your bid, or on which day, as all bids received are considered equally at the end of the bidding cycle.

## HOW MANY BIDS CAN I PLACE WITHIN A WEEKLY ADVERTISING CYCLE?

You can bid for as many properties as you wish during the advertising cycle. At the end of the cycle you will be considered for properties you have bid for. If you bid for more than one property and appear at the top of the shortlist for more than one of them you will be given 24 hours to advise us which property you would prefer to go ahead with.

## WHAT CAN I BID FOR?

You can bid for any property you are eligible for. Your eligibility is defined by your household size and circumstances.

## HOW DO I BID ON A PROPERTY?

To 'bid' (note an interest) on a property means that you are actively interested and wish to be considered for the property or properties Durham Key Options are advertising.

You are able to place a bid using any of the following methods:

- On-line on the Durham Key Options Website  
[www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk](http://www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk)
- By automated telephone line 0845 270 1603 (local rate number)
- In person at a Durham Key Option partner landlord office
- By texting 07781 484 604 (see page 25 For details)
- Through an advocate via one of the above methods
- Assisted Bidding (this will only be appropriate for applicants with exceptional support needs)

For further information regarding assisted bidding please contact us.

## CAN SOMEONE ELSE BID ON MY BEHALF?

You can also have someone bid on your behalf, such as a friend or family member, but you should note that they would also need your application number and PIN number to do this for you.

If your bid is successful we will contact you to make the offer unless you request us to contact the person you have let us know is acting on your behalf.

## HOW DO I USE THE WEBSITE TO BID?



### Important notes:

Bidding via the Durham Key Options website is available 24 hours a day during the bidding cycle.

It does not matter what time you place your bid, or on which day, as all bids received are considered at the end of the bidding cycle.

Before placing a bid(s) on the property/properties that you are interested in **make a note of the property reference number(s)** as you will need to include this in your bid.

You will also need your **housing application number and PIN number** to hand to place your bid(s)

There is an easy to follow guide on the website showing you how to use the system and place a bid.

## HOW DO I BID USING THE AUTOMATED TELEPHONE LINE?



### Important notes:

The automated telephone bidding line is available 24 hours a day during the bidding cycle.

It does not matter what time you place your bid, or on which day, as all bids received are considered at the end of the bidding cycle.

Before placing a bid(s) on the property/properties that you are interested in **make a note of the property reference number(s)** as you will need to include this in your bid.

You will also need your **housing application number and PIN number** to hand to place your bid(s)

The telephone service is a user friendly automated system. When you ring the automated telephone bidding line a number of options will be available to take you through making your bid(s) step by step.

Follow the clear instructions to place your bid(s).

**Important note: there are 10 languages available on the automated telephone bidding line as listed at the front of this guide. You will be asked to pick your preferred language at the start of the telephone call.**

## HOW DO I BID BY SMS TEXT MESSAGE?



### Important notes:

Text bidding is available 24 hours a day during the bidding cycle.

It does not matter what time you place your bid, or on which day, as all bids received are considered equally at the end of the bidding cycle.

Before placing a bid(s) on the property/properties that you are interested in **make a note of the property reference number(s)** as you will need to include this in your text bid.

You will also need your **housing application number and PIN number** to hand to place your bid(s)

You can bid for **two properties per text message**, if you want to bid for more than two properties you will need to send a further text message(s).

### To place a text bid:

- Start a new text message on your mobile phone
- Enter your housing application number followed by a space (001234)
- Enter your date of birth in the format ddmm/yyyy followed by a space (for example 30th January 1989 enter 30011989)
- Enter the first property reference number followed by a space (for example 112233)
- If you are bidding on a second property enter the second property reference number followed by a space (for example 445566)

- Your text should look like this: 001234 30011989 112233 445566
- Send the text message to the bidding text number: 07781 484 604
- You will receive an SMS text message response confirming that your bid(s) have been placed or telling you that your bid(s) has not been accepted.



### Summary:

For applicant ref: 001234 with DOB of 30 Jan 1989 to bid on properties 112233 and 445566 enter:

001234 30011989 112233 445566

And text to 07781 484 604

## CAN I CHANGE MY MIND ONCE I HAVE PLACED A BID?

During any weekly cycle, you can withdraw your bid if you change your mind about a property. You will still be able to bid for other properties within the same weekly cycle. Please contact any of the Durham Key Option partners for details.

## HOW WILL PROPERTIES BE LET?

Once the advertising cycle has closed a shortlist is made of all applicants who have made a bid for that property. The shortlist is produced according to the advertised band and date of application/priority date.

If an applicant refuses the property it will be offered to the next applicant on the shortlist, this will continue until the property is accepted.

There are no penalties for refusing an offer unless as a result of a direct offer or if you have been accepted as statutorily homeless by Durham County Council Housing Solutions Team, in such cases more information is available from any Durham Key Options partner landlord office.

Please think very carefully before refusing an offer, as some types of properties do not become available very often and you may not be as successful in subsequent bidding cycles.

If you are shortlisted and offered a property, you will not be able to bid for any more properties until you have decided whether or not to accept the offer.

## **WHEN WILL I KNOW IF MY BID HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL?**

The successful applicant will be contacted as soon as possible after the weekly cycle ends.

If you are not contacted within a week of the close of bidding you have not been successful this time. Keep bidding until you are contacted with an offer.

## **WHEN WILL I BE ABLE TO VIEW THE PROPERTY?**

Following an offer, a viewing will be arranged as soon as possible.

## **HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PROPERTIES I BID FOR?**

Each week Durham Key Options will publish feedback about the properties that have been let. This will help you decide which properties to bid for, by giving you a better idea of how popular a particular property or area is and how long you would normally have to wait and is available on the Durham Key Options website at [www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk](http://www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk) and in the Durham Key Options property magazine.

Based on this information, you may then decide to look for other property types or areas where you may not have to wait as long. The feedback information will tell you the following about each property:

- Street and/or area
- Property type
- Number of bedrooms
- Number of applicants that bid for the property
- Whether the property was covered by a Local Lettings Policy (details can be found on the Durham Key Options website and in the Lettings Area leaflet).
- The band, application date/priority date of the successful applicant.

Feedback on which band a property was offered to may vary where the property was let to an applicant from a band not advertised. An example of this would be where no applicants in the advertised bands made a bid and the property therefore went to a lower band.

## **WHAT IF MY CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE?**

Applicants must advise Durham Key Options of any change of circumstances that may affect their banding placement. If an offer of a property is made based on inaccurate or out of date information provided by the applicant that offer may be withdrawn.

## SECTION 4

### CONTACT DETAILS

#### Durham Key Options Partner Organisations

##### CHESTER-LE-STREET AREA

###### Durham County Council

Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester le Street, DH3 3UT

Telephone: 0191 387 1919

Website: [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

##### DERWENTSIDE AREA

###### Derwentside Homes Ltd.

Towneley House, Clifford Road, Stanley  
County Durham, DH9 0AQ

**Please note: Derwentside Homes are moving premises with effect from August 2009 to:**

Greengate House, Amos Drive, Greencroft Industrial Park  
Stanley, County Durham, DH9 7YE

Telephone: 08458505600

Email: [customer.services@derwentsidehomes.co.uk](mailto:customer.services@derwentsidehomes.co.uk)

Website: [www.derwentsidehomes.co.uk](http://www.derwentsidehomes.co.uk)

##### DURHAM CITY AREA

###### Durham County Council

17 Claypath  
Durham  
DH1 1RH

Telephone: 0191 301 8499

Email: [cityinfo@durham.gov.uk](mailto:cityinfo@durham.gov.uk)

Website: [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

##### EAST DURHAM AREA

###### East Durham Homes

###### *Head Office:*

2 Meridian Court, Whitehouse Business Park, Peterlee,  
County Durham, SR8 2RQ

###### *Customer Service Outlets:*

Peterlee Town Centre, 29 Yoden Way, Castle Dene Shopping  
Centre, Peterlee, County Durham, SR8 1AL

Murton Resource Centre, 16/17 Woods Terrace, Murton,  
County Durham, SR7 9AD

Telephone: 0800 0320835 (free phone)

Telephone: 0191 5185497 (for calls from a mobile phone)

Email: [enquiry@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk)

Website: [www.eastdurhamhomes.co.uk](http://www.eastdurhamhomes.co.uk)

##### SEDGEFIELD AREA

###### Sedgefield Borough Homes

Sedgefield Borough Homes, Green Lane Offices, Spennymoor,  
County Durham, DL16 6JQ

Spennymoor Housing Office (Area1),  
Green Lane Offices, Spennymoor County Durham, DL16 6JQ

Ferryhill Housing Office (Area2),  
1A North Street, Ferryhill, County Durham, DL17 8HX

Trimdon Housing Office (Area3),  
15A Church Road, Trimdon Village, County Durham, TS29 6PY

Shildon Housing Office (Area4),  
51-55 Church Street, Shildon, County Durham, DL4 1DT

Newton Aycliffe Housing Office (Area5), Newton Aycliffe Leisure  
Centre, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 4EH

Telephone: 0845 505 5500

Email: [contactus@sedgefieldboroughhomes.co.uk](mailto:contactus@sedgefieldboroughhomes.co.uk)

Website: [www.sedgefieldboroughhomes.co.uk](http://www.sedgefieldboroughhomes.co.uk)

## **TEESDALE AREA**

### **Durham County Council**

Galgate  
Barnard Castle  
County Durham  
DL12 8EL

Telephone: 01833 690 000

Email: [customerservices@durham.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@durham.gov.uk)

Website: [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

## Notes

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## **WEAR VALLEY AREA**

### **Dale and Valley Homes**

Civic Centre, Crook, County Durham, DL15 9ES

**Please note: Dale and Valley Homes are moving premises with effect from May 2009 to:**

Wear Valley Business Centre  
27 Longfield Road  
South Church Enterprise Park  
Bishop Auckland  
County Durham  
DL14 6XB

Telephone: 01388 765555

Email: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

Website: [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

